

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Frey Joins House GOP Leaders in Calling for Fix to Education Funding Formula



System Penalizes Homeowners Throughout Connecticut

HARTFORD - Rep. John Frey, R-Ridgefield has joined House Republican Leaders in calling for revisions to the state's education cost sharing formula (ECS) that funnels resources to towns and cities. House Republicans recently held a press conference that detailed how the Democrat-controlled General Assembly has skewed funding toward the state's seven largest cities, home to some of the worst performing schools.

From 1996 to 2003, the Legislature reduced per pupil spending in suburban towns by 2 percent, while at the same time increased that figure by 18 percent for the large cities. Democrats hold 30 of 32 house seats in those seven "urban core" cities as defined by a University of Connecticut (UConn) demographic model that Republicans based their presentation on. For every income tax dollar the cities send to Hartford they receive back \$4.39 in overall state aid. Conversely, the seven wealthiest towns (Greenwich, Darien, New Canaan, Westport, Weston, Wilton and Ridgefield) get back just *two cents* for every income tax dollar sent to Hartford.

"The state's education formulas has been broken for years," said Rep. Frey, who serves as an Assistant Minority Leader. "However, these figures show just how badly skewed it is in favor of large cities. Property owners in most towns are being forced to pick up the tab for this disparity and it's clearly time to make major changes. As Ridgefield's Board of Finance reviews the budget requests from the Board of Education, it would be helpful and reassuring if the state was contributing its fair share."

Rep. Frey added that nearly half of all state aid goes to 18 percent of all Connecticut residents in large cities. The UConn model broke down all towns and cities into five categories: urban core (7); urban periphery (30); suburban (61); rural (63); and wealthy (7). All but urban core cities received less money back from the state than they paid in income taxes. The large cities receive, on average, nearly \$6,000 per student under the ECS formula, while 61 suburban towns get on average \$1,300.

"While Ridgefield has seen an increase in state education aid from \$231,000 six years ago to \$1,500,000 in the current fiscal year, it is still well below the amount due

Ridgefield according to the state's ECS. Unfortunately, wealthy and some other towns have been capped below the statutory funding levels," Rep. Frey said.

"Unfortunately, for Connecticut taxpayers, the majority party feels is completely acceptable to keep the ECS formula exactly as is," said Rep. Frey. "The mayors of New haven and Bridgeport last week said that this shouldn't be about cities vs. small towns; in the next breath, they call for an increase in the state income tax. By demonstrating how unfair the system is to suburban towns, I'm hopeful we can begin new dialog to finally have some revisions implemented. All students in the state deserve a quality education."